

**MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST  
DETERMINATION OF ELIGIBILITY FORM**

NR Eligible: yes ☐  
no ☐

Property Name: Edgar Allan Poe Homes Inventory Number: B-5119  
Address: Bounded by Fremont St., Saratoga St., Amity St., and Lexington St.  
(excepting Poe House) Historic district: ☐ yes ☒ no  
City: Baltimore Zip Code: 21201 County: Baltimore City  
USGS Quadrangle(s): Baltimore West  
Property Owner: Housing Authority of Baltimore City Tax Account ID Number: not available  
Tax Map Parcel Number(s): \_\_\_\_\_ Tax Map Number: 18  
Project: Red Line Corridor Transit Study Agency: Mass Transit Administration  
Agency Prepared By: John Milner Associates, Inc.  
Preparer's Name: Katherine Larson Farnham Date Prepared: 1/23/2006  
Documentation is presented in: Enoch Pratt Free Library--Maryland Room vertical files  
Preparer's Eligibility Recommendation: \_\_\_\_\_ Eligibility recommended ☒ Eligibility not recommended  
Criteria: ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D Considerations: ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G  
*Complete if the property is a contributing or non-contributing resource to a NR district/property:*  
Name of the District/Property: \_\_\_\_\_  
Inventory Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Eligible: ☐ yes Listed: ☐ yes  
Site visit by MHT Staff ☐ yes ☒ no Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Description of Property and Justification: *(Please attach map and photo)*

The Edgar Allan Poe Homes are a multi-building garden-style public housing project. The site, occupying most of the block between Fremont St., W. Saratoga St., Amity St., and W. Lexington St., is filled with a carefully arranged series of oblong two- and three-story apartment buildings. Most of the buildings are organized into long horseshoe-shaped courts consisting of three buildings with an open end on the street side. The courts face either north on Saratoga, south on Lexington, or northeast on Fremont. Service alleys are located between the courts and parallel with them. Buildings on Amity St. front directly on the street with an alley behind them. The courts and alleys are separated from the street by brick walls with center entrances. The court interiors are pedestrian zones with paved surfaces, mature trees in planter areas, concrete benches, and a few shrubs. The service alley areas have small chain-link fenced back yards with trees and shrubs, surrounding central paved driveways. Within the complex is a central steam plant and a community park with playground. The historic Edgar Allan Poe House on Amity St. just above Lexington, constructed in the early 1800s and now a museum, was preserved and encapsulated into the southwest corner of the complex. At the northeast corner of the Poe Homes block is an older church complex, now used by a Baptist congregation.

The Poe Homes buildings are side-gabled common-bond brick buildings with a horizontal emphasis. The gabled roofs are later

**MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST REVIEW**

Eligibility recommended \_\_\_\_\_ Eligibility not recommended ☒  
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MHT Comments:

*John Milner*  
Reviewer, Office of Preservation Services

*Katherine Larson Farnham*  
Reviewer, National Register Program

7/26/06  
Date

8/7/06  
Date

200601766

additions to what were originally flat-roofed structures, and have white vinyl clapboard siding in the gable ends. Some are two stories, some are three stories, and some buildings combine two- and three-story sections, with the shorter sections on the ends. Shed-roofed "pent roof" overhangs shelter the entrance doors on the first floor, and sometimes extend fully across the facades as a porch of sorts. Windows throughout the buildings are one-over-one double-hung vinyl replacement sash, most often arranged in pairs or triples. The brick building walls commonly have rows of horizontal belt courses between groups of windows on the same floor, and the front facades of the taller buildings also have full-height vertical brick striations flanking the center section of the facade. These Art Moderne details are among the few surviving original details of the buildings. The apartments vary in size and orientation, with some units occupying two floors and all having their own exterior entrances. A 1939 floor plan of one of the largest buildings (one of those with two-and three-story sections) showed that it was designed with 14 units, including 10 "flats" with one or two bedrooms and 4 multi-level two-bedroom "houses."

Even before World War I, the surrounding Poppleton neighborhood began to deteriorate into crowded slums populated increasingly by poor blacks, and by the 1930s, the area surrounding Edgar Allan Poe's former home became the first target of the Baltimore Housing Authority's "slum clearance" projects, funded by the FWA. The area now occupied by Poe Homes was known as Slum Clearance Area H, and was filled with short blocks of tiny, rundown homes lacking modern plumbing and other conveniences. This block became the first of five in the city to be "renewed," and the housing authority acquired title to all of the buildings within it, forcing all occupants out. Due to outcry from historians and preservationists, the decrepit former home of Edgar Allan Poe was retained in the final design, with plans for restoration as a historic site. In May 1939, over 250 buildings within the block were razed, leaving only St. Paul's Lutheran Church, its parsonage and school, and the tiny Poe house. The church pastor and his family were soon the only inhabitants in Area H, where hundreds had lived. A complex of 26 new buildings was designed, with an emphasis on the buildings and grounds being attractive but low maintenance. The design called for 298 units of one, two, or three bedrooms, with modern, fully-equipped kitchens and bathrooms, combination kitchen-dining rooms, concrete floors, plaster walls, screened windows and doors, and private entrances. The intended residents were black families who were U.S. citizens, whose income was no more than five times the maximum rental fee (\$17.75 per month for the largest units), who were now in substandard homes, and who had resided in the city for at least 12 months. Single people and boarders were not permitted, and larger families who needed more than three bedrooms were also excluded. Preference was to be given to former residents of Area H and families with young children, although news articles written after the project opened pointed out that relatively few residents displaced by the project had found new homes within it. The first tenants began to move into the buildings in the fall of 1940.

Since 1940, the Poe Homes has continued as public housing. The surrounding neighborhood deteriorated so severely that large swaths of it were razed, and Poppleton has remained largely a poor area. In recent times, the housing authority has renovated the Poe Homes with gabled roofs replacing the original flat slab roofs and overhangs, and newer windows to replace the original sash. Townhouse-style frame public housing units were built around the intersection of Fremont and Saratoga Sts.

As the first public housing project built in Baltimore, the Edgar Allan Poe Homes are important in the history of Baltimore housing and services for the poor. They represent early twentieth century ideas about improving the lives of the poor, eradicating city blight, and providing an environment that housed people inexpensively but with dignity and privacy in hopes that they could better their lot in life. As such, the complex meets NRHP Criterion A. Unfortunately, the Poe Homes buildings have been altered drastically and lack integrity. They no longer resemble their original appearance, and have lost numerous key elements of their design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. Their setting has also changed considerably, with the razing of older surrounding structures and construction of modern townhouses along adjacent streets. In their current modernized condition, the Poe Homes buildings do not embody early public housing, and better examples of such dwellings exist elsewhere in the U.S. The Edgar Allan Poe Homes are recommended not eligible for the NRHP.

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MHT Comments:

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Reviewer, Office of Preservation Services

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

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Reviewer, National Register Program

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Date





Edgar Allan Poe Homes  
MIHP #: B-5119

Baltimore  
West



B-5119

Edgar Allan Poe House

Baltimore City, MD

Kate Farnham

6/16/2005

MD SHPO

View to NE from W. Lexington + Amity, showing historic Poe House

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B-5119

Edgar Allan Poe Homes

Baltimore City, MD

Kate Farnham

6/16/2005

MD SHPO

View to NE along<sup>W.</sup> Lexington St.

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B-5119

Edgar Allan Poe Homes

Baltimore City, MD

Kate Farnham

6/16/2005

MD SHPO

View to NW on V. Fremont Ave. showing 2-3 story bldg. type

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B-5119

Edgar Allan Poe Homes

Baltimore City, MD

Kate Farnham

6/16/2005

MD SHPD

View to S. of a typical courtyard on W. Saratoga St.

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B-5119

Edgar Allan Poe Homes

Baltimore City, MD

Kate Farnham

6/16/2005

MD SHPD

View to SW showing alley entrance + courtyard on W. Saratoga St.

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B-5119

Edgar Allan Poe Homes

Baltimore City, MD

Kate Farnham

6/16/2005

MD SHPO

Courtyard view to S from W. Saratoga St. near Poppleton St.

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PRIVATE  
PROPERTY  
No. 1000  
1000

1000

B-5119

Edgar Allan Poe Homes

Baltimore City, MD

Kate Farnham

6/16/2005

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Service alley entrance on W. Saratoga, view to S.

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B-5119

Edgar Allan Poe Homes

Baltimore City, MD

Kate Farnham

54 00N44ND NNN 0 5020

6/16/2005

MD SHPO

Service alley on Annsby St., view to SE

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B-5119

Edgar Allan Poe Homes  
Baltimore City, MD

Kate Farnham

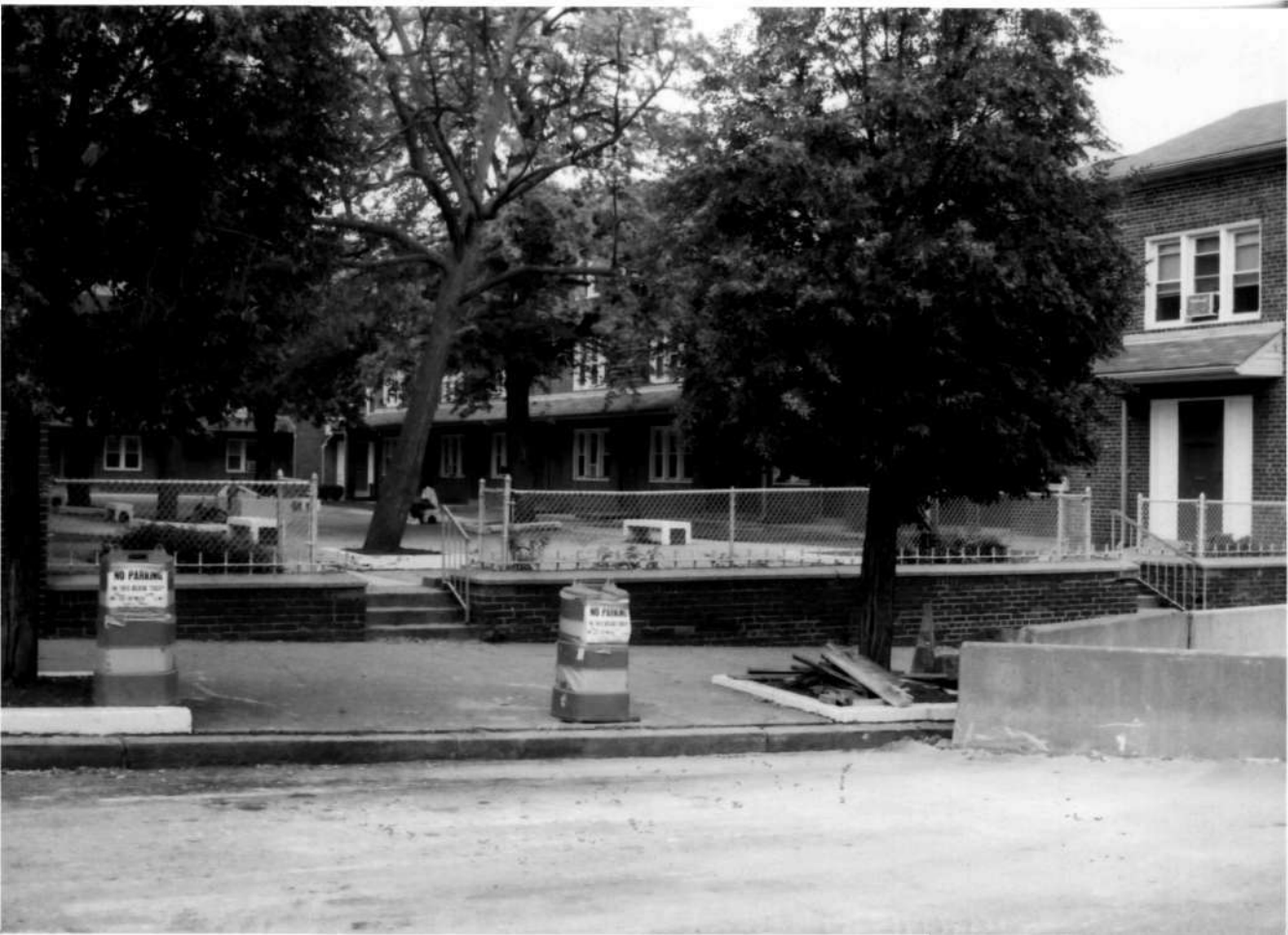
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View to SE along Amity St.

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Courtyard view from Lexington, looking NE

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